

Fighting for economic justice:

a position statement from the Committee to Elect **Barbara Madeloni**

As a union and a country we must address the dire inequities under which working people labor, the outrage of more than 1 in 5 children living in poverty, and the vastly increasing accumulation of wealth for the very few at the very top.

Economic justice is an education issue. One thing test scores tell us is the conditions of children's lives. In American schools with few to no children living in poverty, test scores are higher than almost any country in the world; but in communities with many children living in poverty, test scores are dramatically lower. Education workers who are treated with dignity, and where words of respect are backed by economic policies that show that respect, stick with their jobs; teachers who are publicly degraded and economically harmed work under extreme stress, think about leaving, and often do so.

Work place protections are under attack and workers are anxious about job security. Education Support Professionals often receive disgracefully low salaries. Individuals are abandoned to a health care system that grows profits but not healthy communities. Retirees are treated as a drain on the system rather than community members to be honored and supported. As a union, we must name and fight these injustices, from health care to taxation to military spending. At the same time, we must not negotiate ourselves into compromises that divide our membership and set precedents for more cuts down the road.

- ▶ **Retiree Health Care:** People are now entering positions in education throughout their lifetimes. From higher education, to mid-career k12 teachers and ESPs, to women who lose years of employment caring for children, career paths no longer follow a trajectory leading to decades of service in one position. Raising the age of eligibility, years of service required and/or increasing premiums paid by retirees for health care denies this reality. We cannot accept that some will be harmed in order to accommodate an economic model that protects the rich on the backs of the most vulnerable.
- ▶ Retirees must be provided with the means to maintain lives of comfort and security.
- ▶ While individual locals are engaged in collective bargaining to secure just compensation for their members, the statewide union must give voice to the larger economic context in which this bargaining is taking place, pushing back against the narrative of inevitable decline in resources and fighting not only for progressive taxation, but also for a rethinking of our investment priorities toward the common good.
- ▶ Seniority rights and tenure must be staunchly protected in the name of academic freedom, job security, and because our children deserve experienced teachers. We cannot allow a business mentality to inflict high teacher turnover, inexperienced teachers and disrupted school communities on our children.
- ▶ We must explicitly and vocally ally with community organizers engaged in the struggle for economic justice including those working to raise the minimum wage, end foreclosure evictions, and demand a 'Budget for All.' Reducing poverty improves education.